



Volunteer Telephone and Digital Adviser

Background

Citizens Advice Sheffield provides generic and specialist advice and advocacy services for the people of Sheffield and undertakes a number of national services. Since the Covid 19 emergency our local advice service delivery has been exclusively by telephone and digital means, delivered by staff and volunteers remotely from home. Whilst we will introduce some in person services once it is safe to do so, our service plans going forward will continue a strong focus on phone delivery.

We seek to empower our clients and support them to improve their confidence and capability, including in relation to finance. We advise mainly on welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment, immigration and consumer. We provide advice in numerous languages. We offer bespoke services for people with mental health problems, the Deaf community, people in hospital, and refugees and asylum seekers. We provide mental health advocacy services. We undertake specialist casework, including debt services and that undertaken by our legal service. We have well established partnerships and referral pathways including with social landlords and statutory services.

We aim for excellence. Our ambition is to be among the best advice services in the country, and one of the leading voluntary and community organisations in Sheffield. We campaign for change to social policy to improve the well-being of the people and communities we support.

Purpose

Our volunteer advisers work alongside our paid advisers and advice caseworkers and are responsible for providing front line advice to our clients on the issues described above. Volunteer advisers who gain sufficient experience may progress to do case work or representation.

We are looking to increase and strengthen our ability to provide frontline phone advice and digital support by increasing our Volunteer capacity. We will provide

you with a warm welcome, training and on-going support so that you can carry out your role effectively.

The Role

Our volunteer telephone and digital advisers:

Undertake a learning and development programme to equip them for the role

- Complete on-line training materials (Citizens Advice Adviser Learning programme) and shadow / listen in to the work of experienced advisers and advice caseworkers to develop their understanding of the advice processes and procedures.
- Participate in interactive sessions via webinar and video conferencing
- Complete mandatory training modules as required
- Complete practical sessions on how to use digital tools, use of telephony and Casebook client data system and an introduction to Advice Framework and template for write up

Undertake practice and observed service delivery

This can be undertaken in two phases

Initial Phase - (can be undertaken alongside Adviser Learning Programme)

Handling Client Calls: - Adviceline reception

- Greet clients and check if they have used the service before
- Accurately record contact details and basic information about the client's issue
- Set up call-back tasks for advisers and advice caseworkers
- Understand how to respond to emergency situations with the support of the supervisor
- Record actions on our client database and keep this up to date.
- Participate in supervision and training sessions to develop skills and contribute to service development.
- Volunteers are required to operate in line with all our policies and procedures

Second phase - (to be commenced once Adviser Learning Programme has been completed)

Handling client calls and other digital contacts including delivery of advice

- Interview clients sensitively and effectively to assess their needs and advise on options available to them.
- Keep abreast of major changes in social welfare law and understand how to research and utilise accurate and reliable information from approved resources and explain this to the client.
- Understand when and how to refer clients on for further assistance internally and externally.
- Identify how much help the client may need to carry out the next steps and support them appropriately to do this
- Record actions on our client database and keep this up to date.
- Consult with the supervisor to ensure that advice and actions are accurate and appropriate.
- Participate in supervision and training sessions to develop skills and contribute to service development.
- Receive feedback on their performance to ensure the service is of the highest quality.
- Volunteers are required to operate in line with all our policies and procedures

Attributes

We are looking for volunteer advisers who are :

- Punctual and reliable
- Willing and able to learn and participate in training and supervision
- Able to communicate effectively with clients both on the phone and in writing in a clear and understandable way
- keen to be part of a team and able to participate constructively
- Able to maintain professional boundaries
- Able to keep confidentiality, independence and impartiality
- Have a confident telephone manner and excellent digital skills including good typing skills

Whilst not essential, it is very useful if you speak a community language.

Time commitment

Volunteer advisers need to be available for at least 2 x 4 hour sessions in an average week. It may be possible to reduce this to one session a week after you have been fully trained. We are hope that you plan to continue volunteering with us for at least a year.

The Adviceline rota is organised as follows

9.30am Team briefing

10am-1pm	Morning shift
12.30pm	Team briefing
1pm-4pm	Afternoon shift

During training we recommend you work on one shift for on-line study and one shift for call-listening and practice. Some training sessions and meetings may be scheduled outside your usual shifts.

Facilities and resources

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, most of our staff and volunteers are currently working from home. At the current time, we do not have plans to change this arrangement. We may, however, in the future, deliver our phone and digital services from our city centre base and you may be offered the opportunity to undertake your volunteering from this site, should you wish to do so.

So at least for the current period, we are asking our volunteers to deliver their service from their home. To ensure that this is possible, we will ask you to confirm

- that you have a space where you can work privately (and in relation to telephone advice not be overheard) to maintain confidentiality. You would also need to be able to use a computer in this workspace.
- that your workspace is set up in a way that allows you to work comfortably, including somewhere to sit, it has adequate warmth and lighting.
- that you have a reliable broadband internet connection at home, that is password protected and you are willing to use it for volunteering purposes.
- You will also need a PC or laptop at home. We will discuss with you if you are able to use your own device or whether we can loan you an appropriate laptop and headset.
- We will also discuss with you whether you have a personal smartphone and whether you are willing to install an app which allows you to make work calls (at no cost to you and without revealing your own phone number).